Open letter to all people coordinating, facilitating, and hosting events in (and around) Portland, Oregon–

To Everyone:

Solidarity and action from the wider community, *regardless of personal disability status,* is required for substantive, lasting change to occur. **Share if you care and read on if you're curious…**

Introduction:

Organizers in Portland, Oregon would like to thank a fellow group of sick and/or disabled queers in Chicago for writing the original open letter from a place of love for our communities, rage at the disregard for caution and care, and hope for change and accountability. We appreciate the foundation you've offered and intend to boost and spread the message to more places.

Outbreaks are dialogues*

We are concerned for the safety of all of our community members, globally. We are disappointed to see that, in over 2+ years of living with Covid, event and party planners **still** plan and promote events that are unsafe and inaccessible. To us, this generally means parties and events without defined capacity limits, that do not allow for social distancing, and that do not have mask requirements.

We have already seen the repeated cycle of abandoning mask mandates and its correlation with the rise of cases. Furthermore, we know that vaccination status is not a guarantee of safety regarding spread. We understand members of our community have been significantly impacted. We see elders dying as cities are slow to bring back masks.

Continued Covid safety is urgent at this moment because we refuse to spend another year recklessly endangering, neglecting, and isolating the people society chooses to leave in the margins. We admit that we are still in the midst of this pandemic, a mass-disabling event, and that Covid is a dangerous virus, not just for disabled people.

As sick and disabled queers and our active accomplices, it is infuriating to hear people in positions of social power using the excuse that they MUST gather in these ways for their own joy and for their mental health. This chosen behavior reinforces a hierarchy that prolongs suffering.

We are choosing to center the joy and mental health of essential community members who cannot afford the privilege of such risk and recklessness. Our mental health has suffered, too, and it matters, too.

The insistence on holding unsafe parties and events disproportionately impacts already isolated Black and Brown disabled people. We are tired of watching our elders, peers, and loved ones die. It is both ironic and painful to witness how organizers are co-opting the language of accessibility and disability justice to talk about inclusivity and queer joy for “everyone,” while blatantly leaving so many of us behind.

The cost of pausing to take the time to hear and address the access needs of EVERYONE in your community is minimal when compared to the deficit that's created by moving quickly for maximum profits. It keeps us more disconnected from one another, and in the worst but very realistic cases WE LOSE LIVES by continuing to ignore safety and basic accessibility.

Whether you’re planning OR attending community gatherings, change can only happen when we intentionally hold each other to a higher standard of collective care - in practice, not just in words or theory.

If you are courageous enough to join us in the call for change and accountability– please dream with us a bit, review our requests, check out the helpful resources provided below, and move forward WITH US. Thank you.

Dreams

We don't want to return to what was normal. We want to imagine and live in a less ableist future where we listen to each other and take care of one another. We want to build spaces that work for everyone, and we want this for ourselves and for our future generations of queers & kin.

We want to move slower and with intention. More people are becoming disabled every day, and we need Disability Justice dreams to hold us and guide us.

Changing the way we gather and celebrate as a community will take patience, imagination, and time, but we know that it's possible, WORTH IT, and that adaptations become easier the more that we practice with each other.

Hybridization of events is possible as a **permanent** adaptation.

When we allow ourselves to slow down, pause, listen, plan, and dream– we will find so many new ways of being together. We are artists and dreamers and our strength is creativity. We have the capacity for change and transformation. We have the imagination for empathetic solutions. We can demonstrate love for everyone in the community by committing to these standards.

Please view any discomfort to this message as an invitation to collaborate with sick and disabled queer folks, and to reimagine more accessible parties, events, and gatherings. The pandemic isn't over. Compassion isn't over, either.

Requests for Event Planners

-Please sign and share with colleagues
-Have mask requirements, social distancing capability, and capacity limits at your events and publicize them when you *first* begin inviting people to show up
-Hybridize your events for increased attendance
-Hire disabled and/or immunocompromised people to improve your Covid safety
-Open windows, add an extra fan, and/or use air purifiers in conjunction with one another
-Be PROACTIVE about access needs and assume some of your guests are chronically ill– there are more of us disabled and at home now than ever before)
-Put a chair outside the door for guests who need to sit before entering
-Speak openly and publicly about what steps you're taking to make your events safer and more accessible
-Acknowledge that CDC masking guidelines changed to manage hospital *overflow* and things did not become safer
-Use your social media platforms to share about this call in and your own action steps.
-Be critical and responsible when looking at the current data surrounding covid cases and safety recommendations. Make decisions based on what is actually true vs. what you wish to be true
-Discuss how you might implement changes, both with your collaborators and community members

Requests for Guests

-Please sign and share
-Call in and boycott those that aren't sharing access info or meeting basic safety needs, as listed above
-Participate in any community discussions that are held around these topics
-Use your social media platform to share why having Covid-safe and accessible parties is important to YOU

Resources

Articles

Imani Barbarin: My Black Disabled Life Is Worthy - Cosmopolitan

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Gratitude

- Thank you @rosesarespread for sharing the Chicago letter.
- Thank yous to @peacecosour @riotous_roots @molly_pls @cruelvalentine @_miss_meadows_ @ginhouseblues80 @n.r.carsonnelson for the words they connected with love and care.
- Thank you @leahlakshmiwrites @syrusmarcus @patty_berne @sinsinvalid @andraealavant and all the Disability Justice movement leaders, artists and enactors for the language, grounding, and history lessons that helped create this document.
- Thank you to PDX Non-Binary Collective, PDX Disability Justice Collective, @flyingdogheart

To sign

Please add your signature at this link.

Click **here** to see who has already signed.

If you live outside the area, please feel free to share this language and resources to set up your own google form for folks to sign!

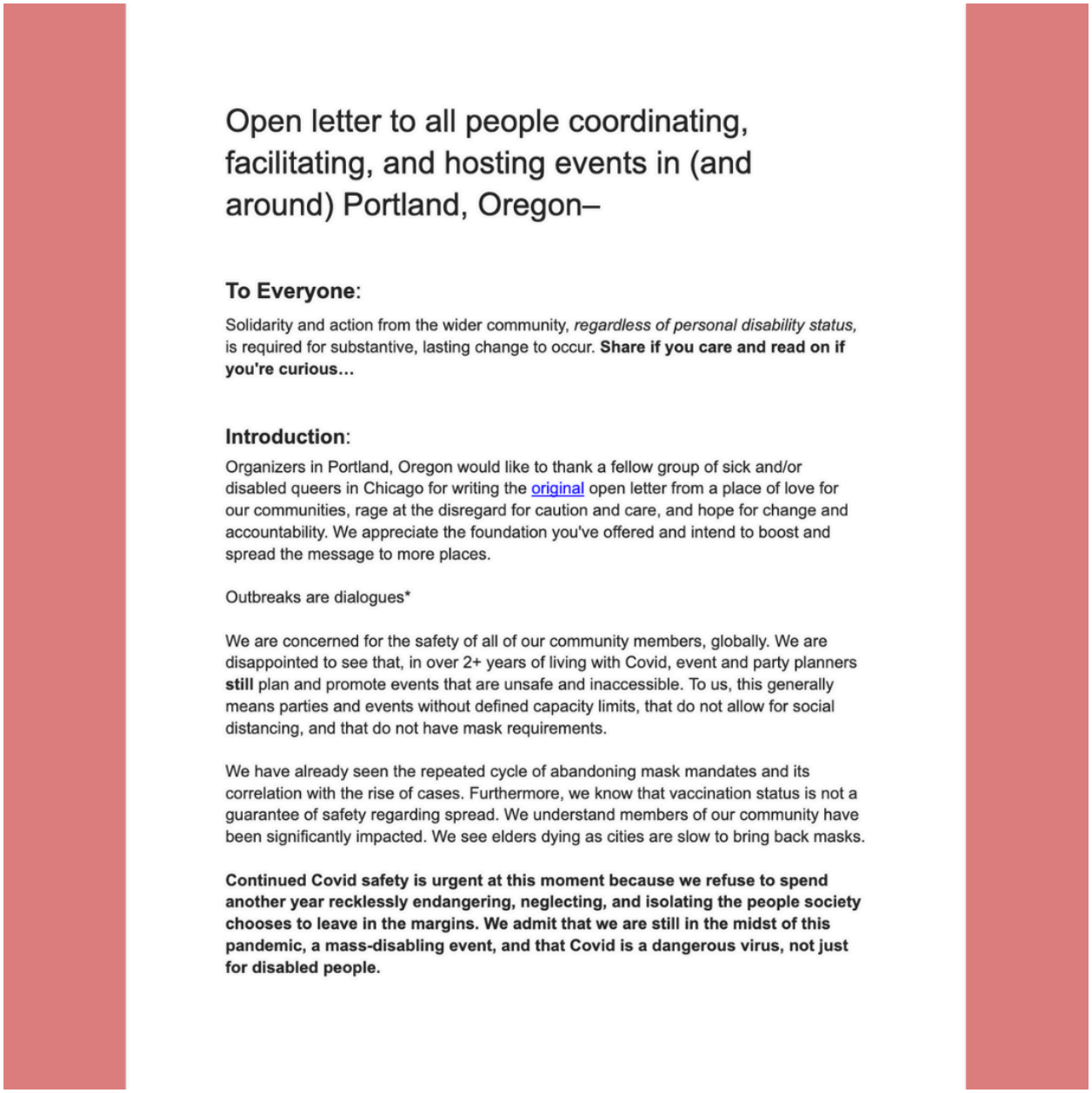
Additional Accessibility

Tags

#CallToAction #DisabilityJustice #Solidarity #ISigned #PDX #PdxDisability #DisabilityVisibility #SaferEvents #KeepThePPE #KeepYourPeople #CPAPsAreInThisSeason

Images for sharing

Tucked here: [OpenLetter Images]



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